

First-Time Cruise Guide

Welcome Aboard!

Cruising is one of the easiest and most relaxing ways to vacation. This guide will walk you through everything you need to know before your first cruise so you can board with confidence and focus on making unforgettable memories.

Before You Cruise

Book Early

- Better cabin selection
- Better pricing
- More excursion availability

Check Your Travel Documents

- Passport (recommended)
- Government-issued ID (where applicable)
- Cruise boarding documents

Purchase Travel Insurance

Travel insurance helps protect your investment and provides peace of mind when the unexpected happens. From trip cancellations and travel delays to medical emergencies and lost luggage, the right coverage can help you travel with greater confidence.

What to Pack

- Passport & travel documents
- Printed cruise luggage tags
- Carry-on essentials
 - Swimsuit
 - Comfortable shoes
- Formal or evening attire (if desired)
- Medications
- Sunscreen
- Chargers

For a complete cruise packing guide, download my free Cruise Packing Checklist!

Embarkation Day

- Complete online check-in before arrival
- Attach luggage tags
- Arrive during your assigned arrival window
- Keep these items in your carry-on:
 - Passport
 - Wallet
 - Medications
 - Swimsuit
 - Chargers
 - Important documents

Staterooms are typically not ready when you board the ship, and can take up to several hours to become available to you. Please be patient as the room stewards clean and prepare your room for you.

When checking your luggage at the cruise terminal, it may not be waiting for you when your stateroom becomes available to you. Your room steward will bring your luggage to your stateroom and leave it outside your door.



Your Cruise Cabin

Cabins are smaller than hotel rooms.

Cabin walls are often magnetic (magnetic hooks can help with organization).

Your room steward will service your cabin daily.

You'll receive towels and basic toiletries, though amenities vary by cruise line.

Dining

Main Dining Room

Buffet

Specialty restaurants

Casual dining options

Most food is included.

Specialty restaurants typically have an additional charge.

What's Included?

Usually Included:

Accommodations

Most meals

Entertainment

Pools

Kids' clubs

Fitness center

May Cost Extra:

Specialty dining

Spa treatments

Alcohol

Soda and specialty coffee (varies by cruise line/package)

Shore excursions

Casino

Internet

Gratuities (depending on fare or cruise line)

Shore Excursions

Book through the cruise line or independently. Booking thorough the cruise line is highly recommended, as the cruise ships will wait for you if there is a delay in returning from your excursion, or will get you to the next port of call in the event that the ship cannot wait.

Always return to the ship on time.

Bring:

Sunscreen

Water

ID (if recommended by your cruise line or port)

Cruise card

Cash or card for purchases

Towel

Download the Cruise Line App

Many cruise line apps allow you to:

View daily schedules

Reserve dining

Book activities

Message family members (on participating lines)

View your onboard account

Find your way around the ship



Seasickness

Most people don't experience significant motion sickness.

If you're concerned:

Motion sickness medication

Sea bands

Ginger products

Stay hydrated

Spend time on open decks if you feel unwell

Money & Gratuities

Most purchases are charged to your onboard account.

Cash is rarely needed on the ship.

Tips may be prepaid, added automatically, or handled differently depending on the cruise line and fare.

Daily Activities

There is always something to do on board the ship. You can find out what activities are happening throughout the day by checking the app, or the newsletter that is delivered to your stateroom every evening.

Examples:

Live shows

Comedy

Trivia

Pool games

Live music

Movies

Fitness classes

Kids' clubs

Theme nights

Disembarkation

Settle your onboard account if needed.

Place checked luggage outside your cabin the night before if using luggage assistance.

Keep travel documents and valuables with you.

Follow your assigned departure time.

10 Tips for First-Time Cruisers

1. Arrive in your departure city a day early if you're flying.
2. Pack medications in your carry-on.
3. Download the cruise line app before boarding.
4. Attend the muster (safety) drill.
5. Explore the ship on embarkation day.
6. Don't overpack—laundry services may be available.
7. Keep your cruise card or wearable device with you at all times.
8. Stay hydrated, especially in warm climates.
9. Book popular excursions early.
10. Relax and enjoy the experience—there's no need to do everything.

Need Help Planning Your Next Cruise?

Whether you're planning your very first cruise or your tenth, Marissa's Dream Getaways is here to help you choose the right cruise line, itinerary, and cabin—so you can enjoy a stress-free vacation from start to finish.